Home and the 1-2-3-4 Cake
or
Recipe Inside

a play made for you by Emily Zemba

NOTES
The three characters in this play are named after streets I’ve lived on. Maybe you’ve lived on them too? Anyway, I hope they are familiar to you (the characters, that is).

Yes. There is a recipe inside.

CHARACTERS
HOWE – Observant, funny. Pragmatic to a fault.
FRANKLIN – Curious, wild. A troublemaker.

TO PERFORM THIS PLAY YOU WILL NEED
1 cup butter
2 cups sugar
3 cups flour
4 eggs
It begins. In the kitchen. (as most things do)

CHAMPLAIN
Ok. Preheat to 350 degrees. And boy do I have a story to tell you.

HOWE
If it’s anything like the last one...

FRANKLIN
It is.

CHAMPLAIN
How do you know?

FRANKLIN
All your stories are the same.

HOWE
Fighting words.

CHAMPLAIN
I tell great stories, thank you very much!

FRANKLIN
I’ll be the judge of that.

HOWE
What are we making. What are we baking.

CHAMPLAIN

FRANKLIN
The pilgrims! What a bunch of anxious weirdos!

CHAMPLAIN
They had a lot to worry about. But this cake – wasn’t one of them. The only thing you need to know is: 1, 2, 3, 4.

HOWE
1, 2, 3, 4.
FRANKLIN
Ok. 1.

CHAMPLAIN
One! One Day.

HOWE
Here we go...

CHAMPLAIN
One day! While working the counter at the corner store. 1 cup butter.

HOWE
The corner store?! Oh, this is an old story.

FRANKLIN
All Champlain’s stories are old stories.

CHAMPLAIN
You’ll like this story!

HOWE
Ok. 1 cup of butter.

CHAMPLAIN
One ... late afternoon, while working my counter shift at the corner store, I was there twiddling my thumbs, watching sunlight and shadows move across the ceiling, counting the pennies in the take-a-penny/leave-a-penny dish, when this couple comes in. Softened if possible.

FRANKLIN
What?

HOWE
Soften the butter.

CHAMPLAIN
This couple steps up to my counter, this nice couple, a young couple, a generous kind of adventurous looking couple... Two.

FRANKLIN
Two people.
CHAMPLAIN
Step 2.

HOWE
2 cups

CHAMPLAIN
2 cups of sugar.

FRANKLIN
What kind of sugar?

CHAMPLAIN
I like to use 1 cup brown. 1 cup white. If I have it. And they’re lost.

HOWE
Who’s lost?

FRANKLIN
I’m lost.

CHAMPLAIN
The couple is lost! And their phones are dead. And so I let them charge their phones with the extra charger that we always kept at the counter at the time. No idea if they keep a charger at the counter still. Have you blended?

FRANKLIN
Blended?

HOWE
Blend the butter and the sugar.

CHAMPLAIN
Yes, blend the butter and the sugar, and the couple tells me that as they were driving around trying to get un-lost, they passed a magnificent house! With a FOR SALE sign in front. A beautiful little gray house, set back from the road, with big windows, and a soft pink door, and two lovely trees overhanging the driveway, and four large forsythia bushes in the front. I love the smell of butter and sugar. Where are we?

HOWE
In the story?
FRANKLIN
In the recipe.

CHAMPLAIN
In love! The couple was in love with the house. And they needed to charge their phones and call the number on the FOR SALE sign. That’s why they had come into the store.

HOWE
We’re at 3.

FRANKLIN
1 cup butter, 2 cups sugar, blend together, and then,

CHAMPLAIN
And then! Suddenly there’s this woman!

FRANKLIN
What woman?

HOWE
Which woman?

CHAMPLAIN
A woman I hadn’t seen before – and she pops up from behind the pretzel rack

FRANKLIN
The pretzel rack?

CHAMPLAIN
Yes, we had a rack for pretzels.

HOWE
A rack for just pretzels??

CHAMPLAIN
Maybe there were other chips on there too. Anyway, she pops out from behind the pretzels, and she’s holding a jar of olives – which isn’t important, except, you know, I like olives – and she says .... oh. What’s next?

FRANKLIN
You’re telling the story!
CHAMPLAIN
In the recipe. Where are we? 1, 2,

FRANKLIN
3!

HOWE
3 cups of flour! I’ll do the flour. I like the feel of flour.

FRANKLIN
You like the feel of flour?

HOWE
It’s… soft.

CHAMPLAIN
She says –

FRANKLIN
I hate the feel of flour.

CHAMPLAIN
No, not that.

FRANKLIN
Powder under my nails. Yeesh.

CHAMPLAIN
“Excuse me,” she says, “sorry to interrupt. But you see. I was just here, behind the pretzel rack,”

HOWE
Pretzel racks aren’t a thing… are they?

CHAMPLAIN
“and I couldn’t help but overhear your situation, and, well, I own that house you passed. The house with the big windows, and the pink door, and the two trees, and the four –

FRANKLIN
Eggs!

CHAMPLAIN
...

6
FRANKLIN
... that’s, the only thing missing.

CHAMPLAIN
Right! Eggs! 4 eggs.

FRANKLIN
That’s a lot of eggs.

CHAMPLAIN
It’s a dense cake.

HOWE
It’s a dense story.

CHAMPLAIN
I’m almost at the end! All right, blend in the eggs, one at a time, then stir in the flour, and listen to this:

FRANKLIN
Blending.

HOWE
Listening.

FRANKLIN
Waiting.

CHAMPLAIN
“I own that house on the corner. The house with the big windows, and the pink door, and the two trees, and the four large forsythia bushes in the front. And, if you like it so much, well, you should just take it. Name the price.”

FRANKLIN
—. What?

HOWE
“Just take it”? 
CHAMPLAIN
YES! The woman explains that she had been trying to sell it for a while, and gotten many offers, but she’d never heard someone express such admiration for the house, and she’d never heard of anyone coming upon the house because they were LOST... and so she thought the couple should just HAVE IT. And pour it into this 9x13 pan.

FRANKLIN
That’s it?

CHAMPLAIN
They made an offer right there! And she accepted. And they thanked her. And I let the woman have the olives for free. And they all, everyone, lived happily ever after. It’s also perfectly acceptable to use a cupcake tin. And if you’re doing that, you might as well add chocolate chips. Bake it at 350 degrees for 25 minutes or so. You really can’t mess this recipe up.

FRANKLIN
That can’t be true. That’s not a true story. It’s too...

HOWE
Easy.

FRANKLIN
Unrealistic.

HOWE
Convenient.

FRANKLIN
And nothing really happened.

CHAMPLAIN
Oh, such harsh judges! It’s more about the moral, anyway.

FRANKLIN
What’s the moral?

CHAMPLAIN
Well, let’s see, I think it’s... um.

HOWE
Keep a phone charger at the counter.
FRANKLIN
Olives are always on the house.

HOWE
Maybe it’s just... share?

FRANKLIN
Share??

CHAMPLAIN

HOWE
And...

FRANKLIN
Enjoy each other.

CHAMPLAIN
And listen.

HOWE
From behind pretzel racks! If at all possible!

CHAMPLAIN
And.

FRANKLIN
Some things are, just, simple. I guess. They can just be simple.

CHAMPLAIN
There’s nothing wrong with simple.

HOWE
When you don’t have much.

FRANKLIN
When you need something sweet.

HOWE
When you find yourself wondering, or worrying, about, well,
CHAMPLAIN
There’s a lot to worry about.
But this cake – isn’t one of them.
Enjoy.

END OF PLAY —
— BUT WAIT!
THERE’S,
AN EPILOGUE:

CHAMPLAIN
Oh! One more thing!

HOWE
Uh oh.

FRANKLIN
Oh no.

CHAMPLAIN
If you like a glaze, there’s something you can do:
1 ½ to 2 cups confectioners’ sugar.
3 to 4 to 5 tablespoons Milk, or Water, or Citrus, or even a liqueur of your choice!
Then, oh why not, throw in some vanilla extract. How much? Well, no one in their right mind ever actually measures out vanilla extract, so follow your gut. And, actually, oh, but, honestly, you may want to skip the extract if you’re using a liqueur, or a citrus, because –

FRANKLIN
Ahem!

CHAMPLAIN
Right. Sorry. Yes. And then simply whisk. And whisk. And whisk...